

WESTWOOD RECREATION DEPARTMENT
RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of February 11, 2013

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER at 8:08 P.M.

Present: Mayor John Birkner, Councilmember Peter Grefrath, Board Chair Michael Griffin, Vice Chair Catalano, Members Janine Borgersen, Chris Codner, Joan Hluchan, Don Smith, Recreation Director Gary Buchheister, Admin. Asst. Margaret McDonough

Absent: John Toale

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of January 14, 2013: Member Smith made a Motion to Accept the Minutes as presented; Member Hluchan seconded the Motion; All in favor; the Motion passed.
3. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Birkner attended the meeting
4. COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT: Councilmember Grefrath reported to the Mayor and Council that Director Buchheister would like the scheduled improvements to the Westvale 'A' field to begin in the Autumn as to not interfere with the Spring season. The Council's Finance Committee Chair stated this should be reviewed as an additional expense to the 2013 budget. After discussion with Director Buchheister; Councilmember Grefrath will advise the Finance Committee at their next session that the funds are available in the Recreation Trust Account and is not included nor will it impact the municipal budget.

The Department's proposed 'No Smoking' Policy, endorsed by the Recreation Advisory Board was presented by Councilmember Grefrath to the Mayor and Council. The policy would prohibit smoking on all municipal properties including parks, parking lots and buildings. The Council will welcome Karen Bloomfield, Executive Director of G.A.S.P. to an upcoming Mayor and Council meeting for a presentation not to exceed fifteen minutes. Director Buchheister will convey the invitation to Ms. Bloomfield and he requested this be done as soon as possible for the Municipal Ordinance to be Approved in time for the Spring sports season.

Councilmember Grefrath reported that a group of residents attended a Mayor and Council meeting to request that a memorial plaque be placed in Hegeman Park in honor of N.T. Hegeman for whom the park is named as has been done at other Westwood memorial sites. Specific discussion followed including funding; scheduling; the inclusion of the Westwood Historical Society for historical text, etc.

The resident group also stated that Hegeman Park is in need of renovation and upgrading. Director Buchheister presented a 20 year history of park renovations for review. Discussion followed on the municipal park renovation schedule, playground replacement schedule, various park facilities, including the severe disrepair of the McKinley Park tennis courts.

Mayor Birkner reported that the D.P.W. has done repairs to the park following the Hurricanes of 2012. Additional repairs and possible upgrades are planned as the seasonal weather allows.

Councilmember Grefrath reported that a request was made to the Mayor and Council to reserve a portion of the Westvale Park parking lot adjacent to the Dog Park for those using the Dog Park. After discussion, it was decided that the parking lot should not be cordoned off for various park activities / events.

5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

a. Winter Programs: Director Buchheister presented the Winter Schedule Report including programs and current registration numbers. Discussion followed the review including that most programs have record registrations especially the Afterschool Kids Club which is free to residents and supervised by the three Summer Counselors. The Afterschool Kids Club is similar to and an entree to the Teen Program. Three of the most expensive classes were cancelled due to lack of registration considered to be a result of the depressed economy.

Specific discussion of the adult program schedule followed including the Senior Fitness Program which has been expanded to two days per week with an average attendance of 25 per session. The Program is free for residents. Non-Resident fees and the Municipal Alliance Grant pays for the program which may expand with a third toning/conditioning class.

Discussion followed on the Senior Fellowship Club which has a general meeting once a month and a Bingo session once a month. The general meeting is attended by an average of 50 people, the Bingo averages 8 people. Although longstanding, the Club's schedule disallows the scheduling of proposed senior programs such as computers, art, language, etc. which could be held on a weekly basis.

b. Basketball Program: The program is continuing very well. Three of the seven Travel teams should make the Playoffs. The Recreation Programs have experienced very positive seasons without any negative issues from referees and/or parent spectators as has occurred in the past.

c. Smoke Free Parks: Addressed under Item 4. Director Buchheister distributed a newspaper article regarding G.A.S.P.

d. Park Facility Report: Addressed under Item 4. Director Buchheister stated that a number of factors have postponed the cyclical schedule of upgrading park facilities. He commended the D.P.W. for their diligence and quick response to resident complaints or emergencies for the nine parks they maintain. Responding to Director Buchheister's inquiry; Councilmember Grefrath stated that the project status is contingent on the proposed municipal budget. Director Buchheister stated that the Westwood Tennis Team, now in its third year, continues to expand. The sport is experiencing a resurgence and if the facility was in better condition; use of the courts would increase proportionally. Discussion followed including the belief that the courts have not been renovated since their installation more than 40 years ago. Mayor Birkner requested a report be submitted of the entire sport for review.

Mayor Birkner also requested that the Recreation Board submit a plan for upgrade and renovation of all parks, citing the current and proposed active and passive recreational use for each. He stated that Brookside Park was badly damaged by the last two floods; the baseball field repaired several times is no longer required by use of the new Westvale fields, the basketball courts are damaged. Mayor Birkner questioned whether the park should be used as a passive area or if it can be re-designated to a new purpose. The requested report should contain a similar review of each park and the facilities of each. Discussion followed on the current status and possible uses of the various park facilities.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Committee Assignments: Director Buchheister asked the Board Members for the preference of Assignments stating that Member John Toale has requested Facility Improvements (Parks & Community Center). Vice Chair Heidi Catalano and Member Joan Hluchan requested the Youth and Pre-school Committee, Member Griffin requested Sponsorship Committee, Member Borgersen requested Teen Center. The remaining Committee is 'Over 55 Programs'
- b. Improvements to the A field: Previously addressed under Item 4.
- d. Lightning Detection Systems: Director Buchheister tabled the item pending the meeting of the various entities of the shared system.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

Director Buchheister reported that he met with the Berkeley School Principal, Regional High School Principal and Guidance Counselors as Recreation Director and Municipal Alliance Chair to discuss the funding of programs not only for alcohol/drug prevention but opportunities for Grades 10-12 activities. Grades 7-9 have the Teen Center but positive activities / opportunities need to be created for the upper classmen. Specific discussion followed.

Councilmember Grefrath, Borough Administrator Hoffmann and Director Buchheister met with the representatives from Westwood Softball, Football and Baseball Associations to address the cost of field lighting. Organization will adjust the use of field lights as much as possible to curtail the usage costs. The representative from Dragons Soccer was delayed and unable to attend the meeting.

Director Buchheister reported that the Softball Association has requested permission to install additional sun shelters at the Westvale Park softball field. Discussion followed on the lack of shade on the newly renovated facility; if the Summer Playground Program could eventually be held at Westvale park; if trees could be planted in areas of the perimeter; etc.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to Adjourn was made at 8:55 P.M. by Member Borgersen seconded by Vice Chair Catalano. The next meeting will be the second Monday, April 8, 2013 at 8:00 P.M. in the Community Center.